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ABSTRACT

Information on the technology, use, and cost of teleconferencing is provided in this users' guide, which is updated annually. Intended to assist state government agencies in setting up their own teleconferences and teleconference policies, this booklet provides information on: (1) what teleconferencing is; (2) media available for teleconferencing; (3) reasons for teleconferencing, e.g., decision making, better understanding, agency cohesiveness, and staff training; (4) when to teleconference; (5) legality of teleconferencing; (6) conference operator service; (7) private teleconference services; (8) user-owned telephone conference features; (9) user-owned conference bridge; (10) the Legislative Teleconference Network; (11) the Alaska Teleconferencing Network (operated by the University of Alaska primarily for instructional and educational use); (12) teleconference terminal equipment; (13) conference rooms; (14) telephone lines; (15) audio and video enhancements; (16) estimating costs; (17) preparing for a teleconference; (18) conducting the teleconference; (19) things to remember during a teleconference; and (20) after the teleconference. Typical costs of conference operator and commercial teleconference services are listed in the appendices as well as Legislative Teleconference Network locations. (MES)

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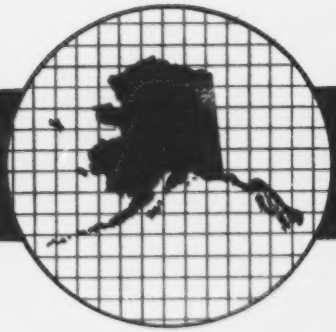
Successful Teleconferencing



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STEVE COWPER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

Dear Reader:

It is my personal pleasure to introduce to you this users' guide for teleconferencing. This booklet is titled "Successful Teleconferencing" because that's what I believe you can do, successfully teleconference many of your meetings when conducting the State's business.

This book was designed to inform and instruct. I hope you will keep it on your desk and frequently refer to it.

Teleconferencing is operationally simple, cost-effective, and proven. Much time otherwise spent away from the office can be saved by teleconferencing instead of traveling. Efficient meetings are often conducted in less time than face-to-face meetings.

Sometimes it is essential that meetings are conducted face-to-face, but many times it is not necessary. It is my firm belief that with some forethought and simple change of habit, many of you who are frequently traveling on behalf of your agencies can indeed "attend" your meetings by teleconference.

Please use this guidebook and teleconference more often. If you desire more information or need assistance in getting started, contact the publishers of this booklet, the Division of Telecommunications Services, Department of Administration, 465-2041.

Good luck and happy teleconferencing!

Sincerely,

Steve Cowper
Governor

SUCCESSFUL TELECONFERENCING

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
STATE OF ALASKA
1987

This booklet has been prepared by the Division of Telecommunications Services as a guide for Alaska government agencies interested in teleconferencing.

We hope this information will be useful to you. While the purpose of this handbook is to assist state government agencies in setting up their own teleconferences and teleconference policies, it cannot answer everybody's questions.

If you wish additional information on particular aspects of teleconferencing or have questions or comments on any of the material provided in this handbook, please feel free to contact:

Division of Telecommunications Services
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P.O. Box C, MS 0202
Juneau, AK 99811-0202
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WHAT IS A TELECONFERENCE?

An audio teleconference is a meeting between two or more persons in different locations, conducted through an electronic medium. The most common form of teleconference is the one we use daily: The telephone call.

While the plain old telephone call is fine for discussion between two individuals, it is inadequate for meetings involving more than one person at either end of the line. Recently however, there have been many developments in equipment and services that overcome the limitations of the plain old telephone and telephone conference services.

These developments include improved telephones with built-in loudspeakers and microphones that allow several persons in the same room to participate in a telephone conversation; more sophisticated teleconference sets that include multiple microphones and speakers and can accommodate groups of 20 or more at a single location; and special telephone equipment that can tie 6 to 40 or more telephone lines into a single conference.

GETTING TOGETHER

While the public telephone system is the most common medium for tying different locations together for conferencing, it is not the only teleconferencing system available. There are also dedicated conference networks in which two or more locations are interconnected with permanent conference circuits. While these dedicated lines are usually leased from telephone companies, they are not telephone lines in the usual sense because they are available full-time, and dialing is not required.

Because dedicated networks are expensive, they are practical only for organizations that do large amounts of conferencing between specific locations.

As indicated earlier, the public telephone system is the most common teleconference networking medium. The telephone system, in addition to being more economical and practical for low volume users, offers flexibility not available in a strictly dedicated network; any location in the world that can be reached by telephone is a potential teleconference site.

WHY TELECONFERENCE?

One of the most frequently stated reasons for teleconferencing is the reduction of travel costs. Many studies have shown that a large proportion of typical business meetings could be conducted by teleconferencing as effectively as face to face meetings and, where face to face meetings involve travel, the savings in travel expense and lost time can be considerable. As an example: If three people travel from Juneau to a few-hour meeting with a like number of colleagues in Anchorage, the air fare alone would be about $1,000.00; if an overnight stay is required, per diem would be $240.00, and if the value of time lost in travel is accounted for, the cost of such a meeting could easily reach $1,500.00. A long distance telephone teleconference connection between Anchorage and Juneau is $51.00 per hour.

While avoidance of travel costs is a principal factor in the growth of teleconferencing, it is not the only benefit. Agencies that employ the teleconference as a regular working tool do it for the following reasons:

Faster, better decision making: When a decision depends on information or concurrence of several people, resolutions can usually be reached sooner if all are involved simultaneously, than if a series of separate meetings, messages or phone calls are exchanged.

Better understanding: There is much less likelihood of misunderstandings in a group discussion than where subjects are discussed through separate exchanges, with information passed through one person to another.

Agency cohesiveness: Where an agency has field offices or staff in geographically separated locations, regularly scheduled staff teleconferences can improve the sense of belonging, increase the understanding of agency functions and projects, and reduce the possibility of duplication of effort.

Staff training: Teleconferencing offers many opportunities for training and education. Some institutional organizations, such as those in education and medicine, conduct regular seminars by teleconference. However, training by teleconference is not limited to that available in formal courses or seminars; it is often possible to obtain the services of experts in particular fields such as law, engineering, accounting, etc. to spend an hour or so in lecturing, or discussing specialized topics with your staff by telephone. Even if there is a cost for the expert's time, the cost generally will be much less than an "in-house" presentation.

WHEN TO TELECONFERENCE

While teleconferencing will not eliminate the need for all face to face meetings, it is an efficient substitute in many situations. (Some experts have estimated that as much as 90 percent of business conducted at typical meetings could be handled through audio-only teleconferencing.)

Some meeting situations that are particularly suitable for teleconferencing are:

1. Short discussions requiring the involvement of only a few people.

2. Pre-proposal or bidders conferences. Having prospective bidders on a single teleconference to discuss a request for proposals or bids can speed up the discussion process and ensure that all interested parties have the same information.

3. When you need to get people together quickly for an unscheduled meeting, or when weather interferes with travel plans.

4. When you want to have an expert witness or speaker address a meeting or be available for discussion, but whose presence is not required for the entire meeting.

5. When training or instruction is needed for geographically separated individuals or when instructors are based so far away from the target group that travel is a problem.

6. Public hearings when the affected public segment is in a single location or only a limited amount of comment is expected.

7. Formal or informal board, commission or council meetings.

8. Routine staff meetings where members of an agency staff or a project team are in different locations.

LEGALITY OF TELECONFERENCING

In 1985, legislation relating to the use of teleconferencing under the Administrative Procedures Act was enacted. This legislation amended AS 44.62, the Administrative Procedures Act, and clarified the legal use of teleconferencing for agency meetings and public hearings. Teleconferencing may be used to establish quorums, take testimony and vote. Public meeting notice requirements were expanded and for those meetings which use teleconferencing, the teleconference sites must be listed. Copies of the legislation, Chapter 54, SLA 85, may be obtained from local Legislative Information Offices or the Alaska State Library.

TELEPHONE TELECONFERENCES

There are several methods for setting up multi-location conferences using the public telephone network. These include:

Conference Operator Service offered as part of your regular long-distance telephone service;

Private teleconference services. These are independent companies that have their own telephone conference bridges, and offer interconnection service at an hourly rate;

User-owned telephone equipment. Many modern private telephone systems have built-in conference capabilities;

User-owned conference bridges. Users may purchase multi-line conference bridges for their own use. However, these are cost-effective only for large volume users.

Each method has advantages and disadvantages and no one is superior for all situations. One factor that can affect the method selected is the number and location of conference sites, which in turn affects the total cost of a conference. Table 1 contains cost information for various services.

CONFERENCE OPERATOR SERVICE in Alaska is provided by Alascom, Inc. Costs for these conferences are determined by a formula based on regular long-distance rates. Unless other arrangements are made for conference operator service, billing is directed, on the the regular phone bill, to the party originating (requesting) the conference.

To set up an operator conference:

1. Call the long-distance operator (Dial '0' or '82+0', depending on your local system) and ask for the conference operator.

2. Provide the operator with the date and time of the conference and the telephone numbers of the locations to be included.

3. At the scheduled time the operator will call all the stations specified and connect them into a teleconference mode.

NOTE: These teleconferences should be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance.

Advantages: Conference Operator service is available to anyone with a telephone, and can be arranged with a single telephone call to the conference operator. Billing is automatically applied to your telephone bill, and a single bill covers all costs.

Disadvantages: The operator does not monitor the line after the conference is established and may not be aware of technical difficulties or inadvertent disconnects that occur during the conference. Since the operator is the one that does the calling, all parties must be at predetermined telephone numbers. One party is billed for all costs.

PRIVATE TELECONFERENCE SERVICES: Private services are similar to those provided by telephone conference operators, but with different billing arrangements, and some enhancements. Generally conferees call the conference service for connection, and are responsible for their own telephone toll charges. The service company bills the sponsoring party for use of the service on the basis of time and number of participants. Cost and billing arrangements, however, can be more flexible with private services than with telephone company conference services operating under regulated tariffs.

Even though private teleconference service companies are located in the lower 48 states, they can be useful for conferences involving Alaska sites. This is because rates for out-of-state calls are lower than in-state calls, and, depending on the locations involved, toll costs for a teleconference using an out-of-state service may be less than those for a strictly in-state conference service.

Private firms can also provide special services such as teleconferencing instruction courses and moderator or assistance services during a conference. Regular users can also set up special billing and scheduling arrangements. For detailed information contact one or more of the teleconference services listed in Appendix 2.

Advantages: Accessible from any telephone location. Special services can be provided. These services can include moderators, conference recordings, automatic conference set up, special billing arrangements and quantity discounts.

Disadvantages: Requires advance arrangements to set up conference and billing arrangements. Unless special arrangements are made, toll and service charges will be billed separately. Minimum service charges may make short conferences more expensive than those billed on a time-only basis.

USER-OWNED TELEPHONE CONFERENCE FEATURES: Many modern telephone systems have built-in conference features that can be used to set up small teleconferences without the need for special operator or private services. Telephone systems with this capability are often identified by the fact that the telephone instruments have buttons labeled "ADD ON" or "CONFERENCE". Lack of these feature buttons does not, however, indicate that you do not have a conference feature available. Most state offices in Juneau (those with '465' telephone numbers) can set up a 3-party teleconference from any telephone. Some agencies in Anchorage and Fairbanks have PBX telephone systems with teleconference features.

To determine if your office key telephone system or PBX can accommodate conferences, consult your telephone instruction book. Generally, to set up a 3-party conference, you must:

1. Call the first party.

2. When the first party is on the line, depress the conference feature button appropriate to your phone system. When dial tone is received, dial the second party.

3. When the second party answers, depress the feature button again and all three parties will be present on the call.

Advantages: Can be set up immediately. Regular long-distance charges only, no additional service charges.

Disadvantages: Limited number of parties can be included (usually 3 to 6 depending on the system available). No control over voice levels so parties in different locations may be heard at different levels.

USER-OWNED CONFERENCE BRIDGE: This is a practical alternative only for agencies that do a large amount of telephone conferencing or that provide teleconferencing services to other agencies. This equipment is fairly expensive and to operate most efficiently requires an attendant.

An example of a non-commercial teleconference bridge operation in Alaska is the Alaska Teleconferencing Network system operated by the University of Alaska, Division of Community Colleges, Rural Education, and Extension (CCREE). This network is centered around a teleconference bridge located in Anchorage. This bridge, which can connect up to 80 or more locations in a single conference, is used to conduct statewide instructional conferences. While this conference system is dedicated primarily to instructional and educational users, it is available to state agencies on a time-and-personnel-available basis.

Advantages: Allows user-owner agencies to set up large conferences at will. Teleconference service agencies can accommodate many client requests.

Disadvantages: Equipment is expensive. For maximum flexibility, operating personnel are required. Not cost-effective unless large number of conferences are conducted.

OTHER TELECONFERENCE SERVICES

As previously mentioned, two state-funded teleconference systems are available in Alaska. These are the Legislative Teleconference Network (LTN) and the Alaska Teleconferencing Network (ATN) operated by the University of Alaska, CCREE. These are both specialized systems set up to serve the particular requirements of the operating agencies, but may be used on a time-available basis by government agencies.

THE LEGISLATIVE TELECONFERENCE NETWORK is a dial-up network. Legislative Information Offices, teleconference centers and volunteer sites in many smaller communities around the state access the network through LTN dial-up bridges. A list of LTN sites is provided in Appendix 3 and in the Directory of State Officials.

The LTN is intended for legislative business, and is used heavily during legislative sessions for public hearings, discussions between legislators and their constituents and routine discussions between regional legislative offices. The system is available to other state agencies if it is not scheduled for legislative business.

Legislative teleconference locations provide teleconference equipment, rooms and a local coordinator who is responsible for setting up the equipment and making local arrangements.

Charges for use of the LTN include a site charge and long-distance charges from remote sites to Anchorage, Fairbanks or Juneau.

The LTN is particularly suited for formal meetings, such as public hearings or board discussions that can be scheduled far enough in advance to allow all the necessary arrangements to be made.

To set up a conference on the Legislative Teleconference Network:

1. Contact the Teleconference Coordinator at the Legislative Affairs Agency, P.O. Box Y, Juneau, AK, 99811 or phone (907) 465-4648.

2. Specify the locations to be included in the teleconference, preferred scheduling dates, participant information and expected duration.

Advantages: Good teleconference equipment, facilities and professional assistance available at permanent locations.

Disadvantages: Availability of service to other agencies is secondary to legislative needs. Since this is a public network, confidentiality of discussions cannot be assured. Generally, conferees must assemble at specific locations and prior scheduling is required.

ALASKA TELECONFERENCING NETWORK: This is a dial-up system based on a large capacity telephone conferencing bridge located in Anchorage. This system, operated by the University of Alaska, Division of Community Colleges, Rural Education and Extension (CCREE), is intended primarily for instructional and educational use.

First priority is given to educational institutions for educational programs, with secondary priority for instructional uses by non-educational agencies and lower priority for non-educational uses.

Non-educational users must pay all telephone toll costs associated with the use of the ATN, plus a bridge fee. Since the teleconference bridge is located in Anchorage, all toll charges will be from the participating locations to Anchorage.

To set up a conference on the ATN, contact:

University of Alaska
Division of Community Colleges
Rural Education and Extension
2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd., Suite 210
Anchorage, AK 99508
Phone: (907) 561-4163

Advantages: Accessible from any telephone location. Services can include use of public facilities, equipment and site coordinators. The ATN can accommodate a large number of locations. The only costs are regular telephone toll charges and bridge fee. There are facilities in most Alaskan communities with populations of 50 or more.

Disadvantages: Not always available to non-educational agencies due to scheduling priorities. At least 7 days advance scheduling is requested.

TELECONFERENCE TERMINAL EQUIPMENT

The simplest and most readily available teleconference terminal is the plain old telephone. But, as pointed out earlier, the telephone has serious drawbacks as a teleconferencing terminal when there is more than one participant at any location.

A step up from the plain old telephone is the hands-free speaker phone. These are similar to regular telephones except that they contain a built-in loudspeaker and microphone so that two-way conversations can be conducted without using the telephone handset. These are suitable for small groups where all participants can be seated within a few feet of the telephone instrument.

Speaker phones can be purchased from your telephone equipment vendor. Prices vary from $30.00 to $600.00 depending on the unit required. It should be pointed out that many key-telephone systems today work only with proprietary telephone instruments, and if you want a speaker phone to be part of your office telephone system, it must be one that is designed to be used with your particular system.

A more advanced unit is the teleconference telephone. These can function like simpler speaker phones but also have provisions for additional microphones, microphone switches and special input and output connectors. These can accommodate larger groups than the simpler speaker phones. Prices are in the $1,000.00 to $2,000.00 range.

Teleconference phones are not available for use with most proprietary electronic key telephone systems, and are generally used in conjunction with single-line telephones. This is discussed in more detail under "TELEPHONE LINES".

Those who have a need to include more than 4 or 5 persons at one location during teleconferences, may find stand-alone teleconference sets to be more advantageous than speaker phones or teleconference phones.

A variety of special teleconference sets is available with prices ranging from $800.00 to $4,000.00 and up depending on features and complexity. The simplest type includes an amplifier-speaker unit and one

or more microphones, as required. More sophisticated types offer features such as special wide-area microphones, cordless microphones, multiple speakers and special control and indicators.

The larger and more complex teleconference sets are particularly well suited for agencies that have conference rooms or office space that can be set up for teleconferences, leaving the equipment in place for use as needed. While most units are reasonably portable, some effort (connecting microphones, etc.) is required to set them up for conferences.

Most teleconference sets are designed to be used in conjunction with a single line telephone. With connectors provided, the telephone and teleconference set are connected together, with the telephone used only for initiating the conference call. When conferences are not in progress the phone is available for conventional use.

Names of vendors for various types of teleconference terminal equipment are available from the Department of Administration, Division of Telecommunications Services.

CONFERENCE ROOMS

While the ideal situation would be to have acoustically treated conference rooms with permanently set-up teleconference equipment available to all agencies, most State offices do not have the luxury of this much space. However, such elaborate facilities are not necessary for most routine teleconference situations.

The most important point to remember when selecting a teleconference location in your office is that it be as quiet as possible, and as private as you require. Background noises such as typewriters, office machines and street noises that we unconsciously ignore when they are part of our environment, are very annoying when heard at the far end of a teleconference link. Aside from acoustics, the other environmental considerations for teleconferencing, (comfort, ventilation, etc.), are the same as those for conventional conference rooms.

TELEPHONE LINES

Because teleconferences including several individuals usually last much longer than average telephone conversations, it is often desirable to have a separate telephone line, more or less dedicated to teleconferencing, installed in your office. This removes the possibility of blocking your regular telephone lines during long conferences and simplifies accounting by keeping your teleconference toll charges separate from your routine office telephone billing. Another reason for installing a separate phone line in some offices is that the type of teleconference set desired may not be compatible with the existing office telephones. Your local phone company, telephone vendor or the Division of Telecommunications Services can assist you in determining if a separate line is required.

AUDIO AND VIDEO ENHANCEMENTS

While properly set-up audio-only teleconferences are suitable for most conference situations, there are a number of communications devices and systems that can greatly enhance the effectiveness of teleconferences. These include facsimile machines (commonly called telecopiers), electronic blackboards, electronic text communicating devices, still-frame television and full-motion television. With the exception of facsimile machines, which are available for general use in many offices, most of the equipment described in the following paragraphs is quite specialized and expensive.

Facsimile: Facsimile (telecopier) machines are devices that can transmit documents in nearly original form from one point to one or more remote locations over telephone lines. When used in conjunction with teleconferences, facsimile machines can be used to distribute attendee lists, minutes, agendas and other material developed prior to or during the meeting. It is generally more economical however, when time permits, to distribute agendas and other material by mail in advance of the conference. Facsimile transceiver prices start at $1,500.00.

Electronic Blackboard: Electronic blackboards are communications systems that allow the transmission of writing or sketches from one point to another, through the telephone system, as the writing or sketching is being originated. These systems include a special writing surface similar to a conventional blackboard, electronic equipment to feed information from the writing surface to the telephone line, and a readout device at the receiving location. The readout is usually a television monitor or similar display tube.

Electronic blackboards are particularly well suited for instructional applications and engineering conferences where the ability to present notes and sketches for clarification of verbal discussion is important. One-way and two-way electronic blackboard systems are available with the cost of a two-way system about double that of the one-way. Costs for electronic blackboard equipment start at about $10,000.

Slow Scan Television: Slow scan television systems allow still-frame (non-motion) television pictures to be transmitted from one point to another over telephone lines. A slow-scan television presentation is similar to a slide show with still-pictures appearing at intervals of 30 seconds to several minutes.

A one-way slow scan system consists of a television camera and electronic processing and transmission equipment at the transmitting location, with receiving electronics and a television monitor at the receiving end. In this application the camera is used to take "snapshots" rather than "movies". When the operator wishes to transmit a scene, the "take" button is pressed and whatever the camera was recording at that instant is electronically frozen and transmitted over telephone lines to the receiving location(s).

The most common use of slow scan television in teleconference applications is the transmission of graphic material, drawings, charts, maps, photographs, etc. and images of objects under discussion. Some systems also provide paper prints of transmitted material.

Slow scan television costs range from $12,000.00 for a simple black and white system to $50,000.00 per site for a two-way, full color system.

Full Motion Television: While the concept of a teleconference where all participants can see as well as hear one another is attractive, it is not yet practical for the casual or small routine conference.

Full motion video teleconferencing is many times more expensive than audio-only conferences. A significant part of the expense of video teleconferencing is in the communications network. Full motion television signals cannot be carried over regular telephone lines and therefore special channels (microwave and/or satellite) must be leased. In Alaska the cost of a one-way television satellite channel, on an occasional-use basis, is $750.00 per hour. When costs like this are added to the costs of special teleconference facilities and equipment, and transmission of signals from the conference rooms to the satellite earth stations, it is understandable why this form of teleconferencing is generally used only by large corporations that conduct considerable amounts of internal business via teleconference.

Conferencing by television is, however, becoming more widely available through teleconference centers established for public use. Some major hotel chains are establishing teleconference rooms in their hotels in large cities in the contiguous 48 states and London, providing video conference service between major cities, and here in Alaska, Alascom has similar facilities in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau. Video conferencing through these facilities is cost effective when there are a large number of people attending a meeting of relatively short duration.

ESTIMATING COSTS

A considerable portion, if not all, of the cost of a telephone based teleconference will be the long distance telephone charges. Therefore, the total cost of a teleconference taking place over the long distance network will depend on the distances of the participating sites from the bridge (the point at which all the calls are interconnected), or in the case of a conference using regular long distance operator service, the distance between participating locations.

Because interstate rates (for calls to states outside of Alaska) are lower than for in-state calls, there could be cases where a group of Alaska sites could more economically use a teleconference service outside the state than one located in the state. This is particularly true where some conference locations are outside Alaska. Tables 1 and 2 show how costs vary with the configuration of the teleconference circuits.

TABLE I
One Hour Teleconference
Barrow—Anchorage—Ketchikan

	Alascom Conference Operator	California Teleconf. Service	ATN* Option 1	ATN* Option 2	Legislative Teleconf. Network
Toll	$88.36	$ 70.02	$102.00	N/A	$ 87.10
Service Cost	N/A	$ 63.00	$ 33.00	$114.00	$150.00
TOTAL	$88.36	$133.02	$135.00	$114.00	$237.10

TABLE II
One Hour Teleconference
Barrow—Anchorage—Ketchikan—California

	Alascom Conference Operator	California Teleconf. Service	ATN* Option 1	ATN* Option 2	Legislative Teleconf. Network
Toll	$146.92	$70.04	$126.75	N/A	$109.19
Service Cost	N/A	84.00	44.00	152.00	200.00
TOTAL	$146.92	$154.04	$170.75	$152.00	$309.19

* ATN Payment Options:

Payment Option #1: $11.00 per hour per line, plus toll costs.
Payment Option #2: $38.00 per hour per line, toll included.

Long Distance Operator: The cost of in-state conference operator service is based on the tariffed long distance rates. The basic charge is the person-to-person rate between the most widely separated points plus 50% of this rate for each additional location for the first three minutes, and 20% of the basic charge for each minute thereafter.

In the example of a Barrow, Anchorage, Ketchikan conference, the basic charge would be $4.75 for Barrow to Ketchikan plus $2.38 additional for Anchorage (a total of $7.13). For each minute after the first three, the cost would be 20% of $7.13 or $1.43. Thus, a one hour conference involving these locations would be $88.36. A different formula is applied for conference calls involving an out-of-state location.

If you are planning a teleconference and wish a cost estimate, it is recommended that you contact the conference Operator for an estimate, rather than trying to figure it out yourself.

Alaska Teleconferencing Network: As pointed out earlier, this Anchorage-based teleconference service is operated by the University of Alaska, CCREE primarily for educational purposes, but it can be used by state agencies on a secondary, time-available basis.

Users must pay all telephone toll charges and a bridge fee associated with the use of the ATN. Users can elect to pay a bridge fee of $11 per hour per line, plus toll charges or pay $38 per hour per line. In the second option, toll is included. To determine which fee is best for your application, check your local phone book for toll rates between your sites and Anchorage. If the toll for one hour is higher than $27.00 per site, it would be less expensive to use the ATN's second payment option.

Legislative Teleconference Network: This is a dial-up network. Non-legislative users must pay service costs, which include a $50.00 per hour charge for all sites included and telephone toll charges from each site to Anchorage, Fairbanks or Juneau.

It should be pointed out again that this system is available to state agencies on a time-available basis, secondary to legislative use, and availability is particularly limited during times the legislature is in session. Availability of some sites may be limited during interims.

Private Teleconference Services: At the present time there are no private teleconference service firms operating in Alaska. There are, however, several firms offering telephone conference services in the lower 48 states. Some of these are listed in Appendix 2.

In general, these charge a flat hourly rate for each telephone connection (participating location), and customers pay their own long distance charges. Depending on the service firm's rates, and services provided, cost for the service will range from $20.00 to $40.00 per participating location. Because of lower interstate toll rates there are times that an out-of-state conference service could be more economical than an Alaska-based service.

Telephone toll costs from each participating location to the service company's location can be provided by your long distance operator or from the teleconference service firm itself. For details on services and costs, contact the various teleconference service firms.

PREPARING FOR A TELECONFERENCE

Plan the meeting. Everybody plans for a meeting, right? Wrong! Many people call meetings and then handle the topics informally. Sometimes the meetings go well, and sometimes they don't. In teleconference meetings, poor planning is much more obvious to participants. Decide on the purpose of your meeting and create an agenda. Mail the agenda out in advance, with a list of participants at each location, to each participant.

Basic steps should include the following:

1. Determine what kind of meeting you are planning. Is it internal, or does it meet the requirements of a public meeting and have to be advertised? (See "Legality of Teleconferencing").

2. Determine the number of participants and locations to be included.

3. Determine what capabilities these locations have for teleconferencing. Does each location have a phone? What kind of phone? Are there other kinds of teleconferencing equipment available such as microphones or speaker phones?

4. Are there telecopiers or facsimile equipment available at the various locations in case additional material need be transmitted to those points?

5. Determine what teleconference service you are going to use and make reservations for the service. Be prepared with teleconference locations, telephone numbers, starting time and expected duration. Schedule your teleconference with the service provider you have chosen as to day and time.

6. REMEMBER the time difference that exists in Alaska and in the rest of the United States. For example, DON'T plan your teleconference for 8:00 a.m. if you are including an area where a time change would make that meeting 7:00 a.m.

7. Notify, **in writing,** all the participants of the date, time, purpose and desired results. Provide them with the conference agenda, list of participants and any other necessary material. If charts or other visual aids are provided, they should be numbered or otherwise identified for easy reference.

8. On the day of the teleconference, ALLOW TIME TO SET UP AND TEST your telephones and equipment to ensure that your scheduled meeting can begin on time.

CONDUCTING THE TELECONFERENCE

1. Begin on time. Clearly indicate the time the meeting will end.

2. If any conferees are new to teleconferencing, instruct them on protocols and technical limitations, e.g., speakers should identify themselves by name each time they wish to speak; speak clearly and directly toward microphones. Do not attempt to interrupt or 'talk over' another speaker. Pause occasionally in long presentations to allow for comments or questions.

3. Clearly designate the person who will be chairing the meeting.

4. Take three minutes in the beginning for the 'warm up' or 'verbal handshake'. Request that the moderator and participants at each location introduce themselves. This allows all the equipment to be tested and each participant to become more comfortable with the equipment. This time can be used for trading in-house humor, anecdotes, quips, etc., just as one would in a face-to-face meeting. THIS ONE STEP IS GUARANTEED TO MAKE YOUR MEETING MORE EFFECTIVE.

5. The person chairing the meeting should clearly define the purpose of the teleconference and the expected goals. An effective technique used by meeting leaders is to call on the various participants to respond and introduce the various topics to be discussed. Each location should be polled regularly to ensure that everyone is given full opportunity to speak. Some people are shy or intimidated by equipment at first and specifically calling on them relaxes the atmosphere.

6. When referring to visual aids or documents available at all conference sites, allow sufficient time for conferees to locate the referenced material.

7. If well planned, teleconferences can be effective for one to two hours. If the teleconference is long, you may want to schedule brief breaks. Agenda items should be limited in the same way as in face-to-face meetings.

8. At the end of the teleconference, the leader should summarize the conference and conclusions, and poll the participants for any last minute remarks. If another teleconference is necessary, make arrangements at this time. By so doing, both time and money in the form of postage and telephone calls will be saved.

9. Terminate the call.

THINGS TO REMEMBER DURING A TELECONFERENCE

1. Keep to the subject at hand. Follow your agenda.

2. Don't let one person monopolize the teleconference.

3. Discourage side or cross conversations.

4. Maintain the momentum. 'Dead air time' is more noticeable in a teleconference than in a face-to-face meeting. If it is necessary to temporarily stop the discussion for consultation or reading, announce the reason so that all the participants will know what is happening.

5. A change of focus from time to time helps combat loss of attention by the participants. This is done by subject change, requesting something from a new participant, normal change of speakers, a polling of locations, etc.

6. Participants should speak normally and take notes on those items on which they wish to comment so that when polled they are prepared to speak.

7. Remember to communicate verbally. Head nods and gestures are not seen in an audio-only teleconference.

AFTER THE TELECONFERENCE

Maintain a log of teleconferences. This will help you in preparing budgets and evaluating equipment and services. A log sheet should include the date, time and duration of the conference, the subject, locations involved, service and equipment used, comments on the efficacy of the equipment, services used, and the costs of the conference.

APPENDIX 1

Typical costs of conference operator services:

Intrastate (all locations within Alaska)

1) For the first three minutes, the cost is:
the first three-minute long-distance rate between the two most distant conference points, plus 50% of this amount for each additional location;

2) For each additional minute, the cost is 20% of the first three minute rate as calculated in (1) above.

Interstate (one or more locations outside of Alaska)

The cost for an interstate conference call longer than three minutes is the highest person-to-person rate applicable between any participating station in Alaska and any participating station outside Alaska, plus $1.00 per minute for each additional station.

SAMPLE HOURLY TOLL COSTS

Intrastate Person-to-Person

	Anchorage	Fairbanks	Juneau	Kotzebue
Anchorage		34.65	52.85	46.95
Fairbanks	34.65		52.85	46.80
Juneau	52.85	52.85		55.90
Kotzebue	46.95	46.80	55.90	

Intrastate Station-to-Station

	Anchorage	Fairbanks	Juneau	Kotzebue
Anchorage		33.00	51.00	45.15
Fairbanks	33.00		51.00	42.10
Juneau	51.00	51.00		54.05
Kotzebue	45.15	42.10	54.05	

Interstate Station-to-Station

	Seattle	Colorado	California
Anchorage	20.54	24.75	24.75
Fairbanks	20.54	24.75	24.75
Juneau	19.94	20.54	20.54
Kotzebue	28.97	28.97	28.97

APPENDIX 2

Typical Commercial Teleconference Services

Connex International, Inc. 12 West Street Danbury, CT 86810 Phone: (203)797-9060	$20.00 per connection per hour, plus toll charges from participating stations to Connecticut
ConferCall 240 Applewood Tech Center 2801 Youngfield Golden, CO 80401 Phone: (303)237-5151	$20.00 per connection per hour, plus plus toll charges from participating stations to Colorado
WestellNET 7630 Quincy Street Willowbrook, IL 60521 Phone: (312) 789-0888	Non-Attended: $12.00 per connection per hour, plus toll charges from participating stations to Illinois; Conference Attendant: $15.00 per connection per hour, plus toll charges from participating stations to Illinois Note: Subscribers paying initial fee of $200.00 and then annual fee of $100.00 receive price discounts on conference services and Westell teleconference equipment.
Darome Connection 480 Second Street Suite 302 San Francisco, CA 94107 Phone: (415) 896-1610	$21.00 per connection per hour (one-half hour minimum charge), plus toll charges from participating stations to California

APPENDIX 3

Legislative Teleconference Network Locations

Legislative Teleconference Network locations are available to government agencies on a time-available basis. All conference sites access the network on a dial-in basis.

Legislative Information Offices	Legislative Teleconference Centers	Volunteer Teleconference Sites	
Anchorage	Ft. Yukon	Ambler	Klawock
Barrow	Galena	Anaktuvuk Pass	Mentasta
Bethel	Homer	Anderson	Metlakatla
Delta Junction	Nenana	Angoon	Mosquito Lake
Dillingham	Newhalen	Cantwell	Naknek
Fairbanks	Saint Paul	Chistochina	Nikiski
Glennallen	Sand Point	Chitina	Noorvik
Juneau	Togiak	Copper Center	North Tonsira
Kenai Penn.	Unalaska	Cordova	Northway
Ketchikan	Wrangell	Craig	Pelican
Kodiak		Dot Lake	Point Hope
Kotzebue		Eagle	Sovoogna
Mat-Su		Gakona	Selawik
Nome		Gambell	Seward
Petersburg		Haines	Shishmaref
Sitka		Healy	Skagway
Valdez		Hoonah	Slana
		Hooper Bay	Tok
		Hydaburg	Toksook Bay
		Kake	Unalakleet
		Kaktovik	Wainwright
		Kenny Lake	Yakutat

For more information contact:

The Legislative Teleconference Network

1024 West 6th Street
Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone: 278-3668

Room 210, Simpson Building
P.O. Box Y
Juneau, AK 99811
Phone: 465-4648

State of Alaska
Department of Administration
Division of Telecommunications Services
(907) 465-2041

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